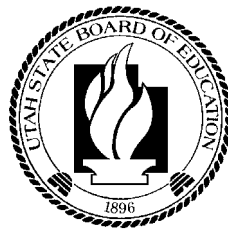


**The Report of the  
Accreditation Visiting Team**

**South Ogden Junior High School  
4300 Madison Avenue  
Ogden, Utah 84403**

**October 28-29, 2003**



Utah State Office of Education  
250 East 500 South  
P.O. Box 144200  
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**THE REPORT OF THE  
VISITING TEAM REVIEWING**

**South Ogden Junior High School  
4300 Madison Avenue  
Ogden, UT 8484403**

**October 28-29, 2003**

**UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION**

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State Superintendent of Public Instruction**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword.....	ii
Utah State Board of Education .....	iii
Weber School District Board of Education and District Administration .....	1
South Ogden Junior High School Administration and Staff.....	2
South Ogden Junior High School Mission Statement and Belief Statements .....	3
Members of the Visiting Team .....	4
Visiting Team Report.....	5
Chapter 1: School Profile.....	5
Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry.....	6
Chapter 2: The Self-Study Process .....	7
Chapter 3: Instructional and Organizational Effectiveness .....	8
Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals .....	8
Curriculum Development.....	9
Quality Instructional Design .....	10
Quality Assessment Systems .....	11
Leadership for School Improvement .....	12
Community Building .....	14
Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning.....	14
Chapter 4: Northwest Association of Schools and of Colleges and Universities (NASCU) Standards I-XI.....	15
Chapter 5: School Improvement Efforts – Action Plan .....	15
Chapter 6: Major Commendations and Recommendations of the Visiting Team .....	16

## **FOREWORD**

A major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate inservice growth and school improvement. Consequently, requirements include not only meeting the standards of the Utah State Office of Education, but also completing a school evaluation every six years.

School evaluation is that effort by the local school staff to take a comprehensive look at the school's program, operation, and effect. The school determines how closely its purposes and philosophy coincide with its actual practices and the degree to which its stated objectives are being reached. It is a three-phased program: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, October 28-29, 2003, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to meet the requirements referred to above.

The entire staff of South Ogden Junior High School is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the Visiting Team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Bill Grilz is commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for the generally fine program being provided for South Ogden Junior High School students, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more adequately meet the needs of the students of South Ogden Junior High School.

Steven O. Laing, Ed.D.  
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*10/30/03*

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Larry Yates, Kathy Harris.....	Supervisor School Lunch

## **SOUTH OGDEN JR HIGH SCHOOL**

### **ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF**

#### **School Administration**

Bill Grilz ..... Principal  
Ron Moore ..... Assistant Principal

#### **Counseling**

Glen Porter ..... Counselor  
Nicole Meibos ..... Counselor

#### **Support Staff**

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Denise Barraza  
Wendi Jorgensen

Jill LaFeber  
Jean McEntire  
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Becky Olsen  
Susan Packard  
Ken Prince  
LeeAnn Prince  
Claudia Reeves  
Sam Sessions  
Brian Simmons  
Elizabeth Smith  
Kerry Taylor  
Kerry Wagstaff  
Annie Williams

## **SOUTH OGDEN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL**

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

We, the staff of South Ogden Junior High School, are committed to providing students with the competence required to further their educational career and to function with dignity in a literate society.

### **BELIEF STATEMENTS**

We believe at South Ogden Junior High School that students will have....

**S**uccess through learning

**O**utstanding behavior

**U**nderstanding of oneself

**T**eamwork with excellence

**H**onor with integrity



## **MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM**

Andrew Odoardi, Salt Lake City School District, Chairperson

Tony Aragon, Bear River High School, Box Elder School District

Kim Baker, Butler Middle School, Jordan School District

Patrick Garcia, Salt Lake City School District

Norma Villar, Oquirrh Hills Middle School, Jordan School District

# **VISITING TEAM REPORT**

## **SOUTH OGDEN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL**

### **CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE**

South Ogden Junior High School opened in the fall of 1950 with grades seven through nine. It is one of nine junior high schools in the Weber School District. It receives students from four elementary schools and is itself a feeder school for Bonneville High School. Fourteen teachers have been at the school for seventeen or more years, and eighteen teachers have been at the school five or fewer years, with ten teachers having three or fewer years of teaching experience.

The school has a relatively stable population. Ninety-one percent of the students speak only English in their homes.

South Ogden Junior High has two active parent groups involved with the school. The PTSA Board and the Community Council meet together once each month. They are deeply involved in the school improvement process and provide significant support to the school and the faculty.

South Ogden Junior High initiated their self-study two years ago after attending the State's training/overview. The school's profile incorporates standardized test data, SAT scores, Utah Core Test data, student ethnicity data, compensatory assistance data, and local demographic information. Additionally, a parent and student opinion survey also served as a basis for the self-study.

*a) What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of their profile?*

South Ogden Junior High School offers evidence of the strength of the self-study process by the continuity of effort reflected in the work of the previous principal and the new principal of the school. Both administrators are to be commended for their example of collaboration and effort to sustain continuity.

Analysis of the data reveals consistent performance on the State Core Assessments. Disaggregating the data based on gender and ethnicity might assist the school in identifying specific student populations that may be in need of additional support. In discussions with administration and school leadership, it was evident that the staff has initiated the process of collecting student data and using data to make decisions regarding school improvement goals, staff development needs, and allocation of resources. The staff did examine GPA data in considering appropriate school improvement goals.

It is important to note that much of the data analysis and description of school practices and programs was embedded in the focus group reports. Both the departmental analyses and the focus group analyses provide a clear sense of the schools' working knowledge about the directions to follow for continuing school improvement efforts.

The Visiting Team recognizes that the school and leadership team made a sincere effort to do a thorough analysis of the school's strengths and limitations, and commends them for this effort. The attention to the language of the self-study process is exemplary.

b) *What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?*

The analysis of the data in the profile is limited in both scope and specificity, providing only a superficial analysis of student achievement, parent and student satisfaction, and trends in student performance.

South Ogden Junior High School recognizes the need to continue their efforts to systematically collect and analyze pertinent student data to guide decisions made by the school.

It is suggested that the school collaborate with the district in designing an effective management system that can be utilized by different stakeholders within the school community. This effort should extend to disaggregating both state and national norm-referenced test data by content cluster, gender, grade level, and ethnicity

**Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:**

In an effort to identify specific student achievement targets, both the Utah State Core Tests and SAT scores should be disaggregated by content clusters and quintiles (mastery, partial mastery, minimal and near) for each grade level and, if possible, by gender and ethnicity. The Visiting Team encourages the faculty to continue its work to gain access to the individual student data available through COGNOS. The analysis of course grades, attendance, and discipline patterns should be incorporated in the school's comprehensive profile in the future.

## CHAPTER 2: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS

- a) *To what extent has the school community engaged in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?*

The South Ogden Junior High School leadership team made a concerted effort to engage all stakeholder groups in a collaborative self-study process. A leadership team consisting of staff members and parents facilitated the process. The leadership team facilitated the staff's analysis of student achievement data and survey results, crafted the school's mission and belief statements, and identified school improvement goals which were prioritized in the development of the action plans.

In interviewing staff, parents, and students involved in the process, it was apparent that several stakeholders still have questions regarding the purpose of the self-study and the processes involved, as well as how the DRSLs and action plan will drive the work of the school in the future. As a result, the administration and leadership team need to ensure that all stakeholders are aware of and endorse the school's action plans.

- b) *To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?*

Information presented in the school's self-study focused predominately on the results of the student/parent perception survey, student achievement data (SAT/CRTs), and focus groups that were formed to address teacher/parent/staff concerns. Many of the school's strengths, discovered by the Visiting Team, were not clearly identified in the report. For example, many of the teachers used a variety of effective instructional practices that were not clearly identified in the report. Additionally, the high level of collegiality, their passion for students, a willingness to engage in professional development opportunities without compensation, student recognition programs, and innovative use of time to collaborate are just a few of the school's strengths that were not highlighted in the self-study.

While the staff of South Ogden Junior High School recognizes its strengths as effective educators, they are most willing to endorse the concept of continuous improvement and professional growth on behalf of their students. The faculty and leadership have demonstrated how the effective use of the self-study processes has disposed them to gain the skills to accurately identify student achievement gaps, reflect on current educational practices, and examine schoolwide practices.

### CHAPTER 3: INSTRUCTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

South Ogden Junior High School's desired results for student learning are as follows:

1. Learning to Learn
2. Personal and Social Responsibility
3. Thinking and Reasoning Skills

#### **Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals:**

- a) *To what extent did the school facilitate a collaborative process to build a shared vision for the school (mission) that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school?*

The interviews with staff and students affirmed that the administration and the leadership team assumed the primary responsibility for developing the school's beliefs and mission statement. Other stakeholders, such as students, teachers, parents, and community members had systematic and ongoing opportunities to provide input and feedback through the consensus-building process to define the school's mission.

There was a very concerted and enthusiastic effort to involve all stakeholders in using the mission and belief statements in decisions pertaining to school culture, classroom instruction, and the development of the DRSLs.

- b) *To what extent has the school defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to support student achievement and success?*

The belief statements clearly reflect the commitment of the school to support student achievement and success. The reiteration and attention to the belief statements are commendable. The belief statements are posted in every room. They are reviewed at assemblies and in the character education program. The commitment to character education offers a clearly defined focus on the quality of the school's culture and ideals in support of student learning.

- c) *To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs)?*

The desired results for student learning (DRSLs) were identified through a process that involved parent/student surveys as well as the analysis of standardized test results. The Visiting Team applauds the efforts of the school

leadership team in targeting character education as a foundation for student achievement. The Visiting Team recommends that staff and stakeholders revisit the DRSLs in order to increase levels of commitment among staff and define measurable goals and assessment strategies to monitor student achievement of the DRSLs.

Throughout the narrative of the departmental analyses and the narrative of the focus groups, there is clear evidence of attention to the issue of alignment of curriculum, instruction, and the DRSLs with the mission and belief statements and the action plans.

### **Curriculum Development:**

- a) *To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum (with inclusion of the Utah Life Skills)?*

The faculty is familiar with the Utah Core Curriculum. Some collaboration between departments has taken place to integrate Core concepts. The Visiting Team feels that a more definitive reference to the Utah Life Skills curriculum might have enhanced the development of the DRSLs by providing the indicators of student performance.

Articulation has begun around what is most essential in the Core. There is strong desire by some staff members to collaborate around integrated curriculum and instructional strategies. The Visiting Team suggests that the staff continue to find time and methods for integrating Core concepts across content areas and grade levels.

There is a clear sense of the alignments that currently exist both with the Core and with DRSLs as reported in the departmental analyses. The faculty should continue this process by coordinating key concepts between and among departments.

- b) *To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's desired results for student learning?*

All the classrooms have the belief statements as well as the mission statement posted. They are referenced by most of the faculty on a continual basis with the students to make sure that they have a clear sense of what they should be learning.

Although it is evident that schoolwide conversations have taken place around the accreditation process, a clear inclusionary focus cannot be articulated by all staff members. The desired results for student learning do not clearly reflect the outcomes of these discussions. Therefore, increasing schoolwide understanding of criteria for selecting the desired results for students learning (DRSLs) will

enable the school community to have a clear focus around curriculum and instruction. These DRSLs are broad enough to encompass and reinforce the effective practices already occurring at the school. The schoolwide focus on reading/writing across content is emerging and needs to be formalized into a schoolwide effort to support the action plan. Clarifying and refining specific action steps connected to the DRSLs will help drive this plan. Formal and informal steps have been taken to promote a collaborative culture. Staff members are willing to invest personal time to accomplish school goals.

### **Quality Instructional Design:**

- a) *To what extent does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students?*

During the two-day visit, the following instructional practices were observed: teachers giving tests, students working in small groups, hands-on activities being widely used in the technology department, information being delivered by direct instruction, students completing worksheet packets, and cooperative learning strategies.

Random students were interviewed by each of the Visiting Team members. They reported that as they go through the school day they experience a variety of teaching strategies. The Visiting Team has observed the faculty to be dedicated, hardworking, and committed to students' success. Designing alternative ways of assessing student work, especially as it relates to the DRSLs, will enhance student engagement and achievement.

With the adoption of the DRSLs, the course curriculum will require modification to increase the number of learning experiences that incorporate the DRSLs into the curriculum. While conversations have started between departments regarding curriculum integration, reading, and writing across the curriculum, we recommend that discussions continue. The departments have recognized the need to incorporate reading and writing across the curriculum. The staff might want to pursue using the reading strategies being implemented and continue to build on prior knowledge of reading levels and "Six Trait" writing to facilitate critical thinking and communication.

- b) *To what extent does the professional staff employ a variety of instructional strategies to ensure the needs of different learners are met?*

The faculty has given serious attention to the need to recognize and meet the range of students learning styles that are encountered in every classroom by administering a learning styles inventory. The Visiting Team suggests that the faculty collectively research and expand the use of multiple teaching strategies

and instructional delivery options to meet the variety of the needs of all students through the use of differentiated instruction.

- c) *To what extent do the professional staff and leadership provide additional opportunities which support student learning?*

They set a foundation for student learning through their character education program, especially as it addresses one of the DRSLs. In addition, it was clear that the staff believes that teaching is “always going on” and is central to all that is done at the school, from the classroom through school activities.

Students report that both counselors and teachers are readily available to assist them. The Homework Helper and tutoring programs are available to students after school. While working on their career goals, students can access Edline to know how they are doing in their respective classes.

### **Quality Assessment Systems:**

- a) *To what extent has the staff developed classroom or schoolwide assessments based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?*

Schoolwide assessment is primarily left to the district or state. The mission statement begins to address expectations for student achievement. Data is being used to measure school improvement. Where expectations are clearly defined for staff and students, results are evident. Where state performance standards are in place, teachers are implementing performance assessments to measure growth.

Many classes are using measures beyond paper-and-pencil tests. The focus group report articulates the faculty practice of using a variety of assessments appropriate to content goals and student characteristics. Some classes are using pre and post assessments, but there do not seem to be schoolwide standards that are being articulated for measurement. Disaggregating the data will provide additional information on individual student progress and offer the framework for the development of schoolwide assessments tied to the DRSLs.

- b) *To what extent are assessments of student learning developed using methods that reflect the intended purpose and performance standards?*

The staff is striving for more opportunities to collect data from assessments beyond standardized test scores. Schoolwide strategies for performance assessment would provide important additional data. Clarifying the DRSLs and identifying specific measurable indicators will also help facilitate schoolwide measurements of student learning. Individualization and differentiation is taking place in some classes and will be strengthened by expanding the conversations



among staff, parents, and students regarding who is not learning in the school and why.

- c) *To what extent are assessments designed, developed, and used in a fair and equitable manner?*

Interviews with students reflected the sense of fairness students felt regarding individual teacher grading practices. There is no schoolwide grading policy.

There is ongoing school administrative support and training for access to and use of student performance data. There is a strong desire by administration and staff to receive and learn to use timely and accurate data in order to better serve the needs of all students. The staff understands that using data leads them to better instructional decisions.

### **Leadership for School Improvement:**

- a) *To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning?*

The leadership of South Ogden Junior High School extends beyond the administration. Many of the staff and parents have assumed the responsibility of the leadership in an effort to improve the school on behalf of students. Some of the teaching staff have assumed a leadership role by delivering professional development opportunities for their colleagues. The teaching of the Six Trait Writing Process was co-facilitated by members of the Language Arts Department. The leadership for the development of the self-study, “Collaborating for Student Achievement,” was jointly shared by teachers, guidance counselors, parents, and the administration.

New teachers are assigned an experienced staff member who serves as their mentor for a period of three years. One new teacher reported that she had “benefited tremendously from the expertise and leadership of her colleagues.”

- b) *To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision-making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative?*

The leadership of South Ogden Junior High is learning to employ data-driven, research-based decision-making. Currently, the lack of sufficient data regarding student achievement limits the school’s ability to triangulate data in their decision-making process. Although data is limited, the administration is cognizant of the need to collect pertinent information not only to improve the decision-making process, but also to monitor school improvement efforts.

- c) *To what extent does the school leadership monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness through a comprehensive assessment system and continuous reflection?*

The leadership at South Ogden Junior High does not have a comprehensive assessment system in place at this time. The development of a comprehensive assessment system linked to the DRSLs will be one of the school's major tasks as it works to implement the action plans.

- d) *To what extent does the school leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources of the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment?*

The leadership of South Ogden Junior High provides skillful stewardship of the school. Parents, students, and staff repeatedly commended the school's leadership for improving the school's climate and culture. Schoolwide policies and operational procedures are consistent with the school's beliefs and mission and are designed to support student learning. The allocation and use of resources are aligned with school goals.

Especially notable is the anti-harassment program that is developing as a model for many other schools. It addresses the conditions for learning that are mentioned as one of the DRSLs.

- e) *To what extent does the school leadership make decisions related to the allocation and use of resources which align with the school goals, the achievement of the DRSLs, and school improvement efforts?*

South Ogden Junior High is in the initial stages of addressing its desired results for student learning. It has established school goals and identified appropriate improvement steps. The action plans will put into place a process for ensuring the allocation and use of resources which are aligned with the school goals and the achievement of the DRSLs.

Based on conversations with the leadership at South Ogden Junior High, the Visiting Team is confident of the leadership's commitment to the improvements identified by the school community during the self-study process, as well as any recommendations made by the Visiting Team.

- f) *To what extent does the school leadership empower the school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning?*

The Visiting Team recognizes the positive and productive relationships that exist among students, teachers, support staff, and administrators. There is strong evidence that the school has created and sustained a learning environment for

students that nurtures a sense of caring and belonging. We encourage the staff to continue their efforts to collaborate across departments to foster collegiality and to provide cross-curricular connections for students.

The administrative team recognizes and empowers staff, parents, and students to share in the responsibilities of leadership. In doing so, the administration encourages commitment, participation, and collaboration. The administration is encouraged to continue building the knowledge, skills, and expertise of the staff to employ data-driven and research-based decision-making. The lack of sufficient data and/or understanding of research-based best practices is evident in several of the departmental reports, focus group reports, and action plan goals.

### **Community Building:**

- a) *To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?*

South Ogden Junior High School establishes positive and productive working relationships among all stakeholders.

- b) *To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?*

The school actively engages parents in the learning process through a variety of programs. The PTSA, classroom volunteers, after-school tutoring, and the school community council are examples of efforts made to extend the school community. Guidance counselors actively involve parents in SEOPs. EdLine keeps parents informed about student progress. The Visiting Team recommends that the school continue its efforts to promote the participation of an active community council.

The school cites a variety of programs and practices which support student learning beyond the regular program and school day.

### **Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning:**

- a) *To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs focused on the school's goals for improvement?*

The staff is actively involved in staff development based on their own needs and desires. It is suggested that staff development efforts become more focused on the DRSLs. The staff should continue to look at formal as well as informal assessments in order to collect data to verify that teaching strategies assure student learning.

- b) *To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?*

It was evident to the Visiting Team that the leadership in the school fully supports the faculty, and the faculty appears to fully support the leadership. There is a strong desire to do what is best for students. The departments report in their study that there is a need to develop a clearer focus on the DRSLs as a means to improve student learning. Additionally, they acknowledge a need to use more data-driven, researched-based information to dictate the school's direction. The staff may want to consider implementing these ideas into their school action planning. The use of time afforded through the early release days is strong evidence of the school and the district supporting continuous improvement.

#### **CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND OF COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES (NASCU) STANDARDS I-XI**

These are not applicable to middle-level schools.

#### **CHAPTER 5: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS – ACTION PLAN**

- a) *To what extent is the schoolwide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up?*

The action plan currently addresses several major concerns identified by the staff and reflected in the profile data. It effectively addresses critical areas for improvement. The entire staff is encouraged to focus its efforts on those areas that will directly impact student learning and student achievement.

- b) *To what extent is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, schoolwide and systemwide?*

It was evident to the Visiting Team that the leadership team and administration, as well as many of the teaching staff, share a strong commitment to the action plans. However, it was apparent that some of the faculty members were not fully committed to addressing the school's DRSLs and recognizing the impact that implementing the DRSLs will have for classroom instruction and assessment. The administration and the leadership team will need to secure the commitment of

the staff before they proceed to implement some portions of the action plans and Visiting Team recommendations.

- c) *How sound does the follow-up process that the school intends to use for monitoring the accomplishments of the schoolwide action plan appear to be?*

The action plans currently do not recognize the need for monitoring and/or evaluating the effectiveness of the school's improvement plan. In order to monitor school improvement efforts and evaluate their effectiveness, the leadership still needs to identify what data/evidence should be collected and periodically/incrementally analyzed by the school leadership team. The Visiting Team suggests incremental benchmarks and analyses of how the data from the findings affected instructional strategies, instructional delivery, and curriculum content.

## **CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM**

### **Commendations:**

- The staff is to be commended on a sincere effort to conduct a candid self-study of their school and to use this process to identify improvement efforts on behalf of the students and parents they serve.
- The staff and administration are to be commended for their conscious and diligent efforts in creating a positive culture and climate conducive to teaching and learning.
- The staff and administration are to be commended for continued efforts in identifying the needs of students, and in creating a positive community image for South Ogden Junior High School. This image includes providing a safe learning environment, holding high expectations for student learning, and having a staff characterized by caring educators willing to do whatever is necessary to help students succeed. Students were observed to be enthusiastic and motivated to participate in the school activities.

### **Recommendations:**

The Visiting Team is in substantial agreement with the myriad recommendations that come out of the departmental and focus group analyses and the goals of the action plans. They are indicative of the high quality of the self-study effort and the integrity of the processes in working to develop the school improvement plans. The hope is to narrow

the focus for the school's improvement processes and link them to attainable results by virtue of the following recommendations:

- South Ogden Junior High School should continue its efforts to systematically collect and analyze pertinent student data to guide decisions made by the school, departments, and teams. It is suggested that the school develop an effective data collection and management system that can be utilized to provide more reliable data for making judgments regarding academic growth by individual students or groups of students. This effort should extend to disaggregating both state and national norm-referenced test data by content cluster, gender, grade level, ethnicity, etc. The school should align the action plans to address findings resulting from the data analysis.
- Continue to seek innovative ways of increasing opportunities for teachers to collaborate for the purpose of staff development, sharing best practices and implementing the school's action plan. The school needs to engage the whole staff in collaborative inquiry with regard to the school's DRSLs. This would include:
  - Posting the DRSLs as expectations in more obvious ways.
  - Working to increase schoolwide understanding of the purpose and criteria used for selecting the DRSLs.
  - Collectively studying best practices and research in the teaching and assessment of the school's DRSLs, and identifying the indicators of students' demonstration of the DRSLs.
  - Developing a means of evaluating student work relative to the DRSLs in order to determine whether or not students become more effective communicators and better critical thinkers, writers, and citizens.
- The Visiting Team encourages building on the collaborative possibilities that come from the use of the Six Trait Writing program and the descriptions of indicators and assessments for the DRSLs to foster the development of horizontal and vertical curriculum mapping and teaming.